

## PHYSICAL TRAINING.

I have been asked this morning to speak to you about physical training, a subject to which I feel we do not give enough thought or study.

In the work of reconstruction which now awaits us we turn at once to the children, and we must consider how we can help them to become healthy men and women.

I will take three important branches of physical training—gymnastics, games, and dancing in turn.

## I. Gymnastics.

Children reared under natural conditions should rarely require systematic exercises, the open country should be their playground, the hedges and trees the gymnasium. The conditions of modern civilization, however, make these conditions impossible, so gymnastics become essential for the children's development.

The word gymnastics is generally understood to mean systematic exercises of the muscles for the restoration of health, and for the development and preservation of physical powers. The primary aim of gymnastics is health.

There are various training systems: German Gymnastics, Musical Drills, and Swedish Gymnastics; of these the Swedish System is the only satisfactory one.

The German System is acrobatic, arranged to suit apparatus, and faulty positions follow, especially the over-development of the shoulder muscles.

Club exercises and parallel bars produce over-development.

Musical Drill is automatic and exhausting.

The Swedish or Ling's System is based on the laws of Anatomy, Physiology and Psychology.

Mme. Bergman Osterburg founded the first physical training college in this country in 1885. The Swedish system becomes educational by the selection, progression and variety of movements. There are movements of correction and recreation. Competition and acrobatic movements should be discouraged.

The method of command in which exercises are given ensures mental, as well as physical exercise.

All are familiar with the *gymnastic table*, yet it might be well to run through its composition.

Introductory Exercises span the bridge from intellectual to physical activity, they secure the attention of the pupils, improve the sense of rhythm, and prepare them for more difficult work.

Then come three general movements.

1. *Arch Flexions* which improve respiration, and make it easier to keep a good position.

2. *Heave Movements*, which develop the power of respiration by exercising respiratory muscles, and making the ribs more move-

able. These two classes occur in the beginning of the lesson, since respiration may be said to constitute the basis of all exercises.

3. *Balance Movements* cultivate general equilibrium, diminish the heart beat, and equalize the blood pressure, quickened by the preceding movements.

Next are three special movements.

1. *Shoulder-blade Movements* cultivate isolation and co-ordination in movements of the shoulder-blades, trunk, and arms; they also correct the student's stoop.

2. *Abdominal Exercises* strengthen those muscles which support the viscera, and improve digestion.

3. *Lateral Trunk Movements* quicken the circulation in the large vessels in the trunk, and strengthen the waist muscles.

The table closes with three general movements.

1. *Marching and Slow Leg Movements* which diminish the blood pressure and heart beat, increased by the preceding movements.

2. *Jumping* includes exercises of jumping and vaulting. These cultivate elasticity, speed, co-ordination, courage and self-confidence, and have important general effects.

3. *Respiratory Exercises* aid normal respiration—the jumping having put the pupils out of breath—and prepare the pupils for rest.

In this manner, within each lesson, one movement prepares the way for the next, and tends to counteract the evil effects of the preceding. This sequence table is characteristic of Swedish gymnastics.

When teaching gymnastics great care should be taken to see that children are suitably clothed, and that there is plenty of fresh air and sunshine. Classes must not be given just before a meal, or for some time after.

Every child ought to have the advantage of joining a gymnastic class, in a gymnasium, under the care of a fully-qualified teacher, and I think we all ought to be ready to make a big effort to secure this. Those of you who have schools of your own, or posts in town, will already have arranged for this no doubt, but in the country it is not so easy. Yet most county towns have qualified teachers and gymnasiums, and I feel sure it ought to be possible to arrange that our older pupils, at any rate, attend some of these classes.

Soon, we hope, distance will be no hindrance, and we shall have no difficulty in making suitable arrangements. Our House of Education Drills are after all only supplementary to the real Swedish Gymnastic class. I don't think we ever give enough time to the study of gymnastics, and the effects of different exercises upon the body, or any of its parts, and it is the greatest pity that students have not now the opportunity of study under a qualified gymnastic teacher, as more serious harm can be done to children in teaching of physical exercises than in any other subject, by those who do not understand the work. It seems time that we as an Association might do something to improve our knowledge of gymnastics, as we all have to give some physical exercises to our

pupils, and it is of the utmost importance that we should thoroughly understand our work.

The *Physiological Effects* of exercise are that waste matters are more quickly eliminated, more oxygen is demanded and supplied, the action of the heart and lungs is stimulated, all organs and tissues receive a better blood supply, and the general nutrition of the body becomes more perfect. Physical endurance and resistance to fatigue are increased. Concentration, discipline, attention and memory will improve, and self-consciousness is lessened.

Much depends upon the way in which a class is given—commands should be clear, bright and firm, tables always interesting, whilst enjoyment is a most important factor in a gymnastic class.

Overstrain must be avoided, and teachers should be quick to notice any signs of strain, especially in the case of over-grown or delicate children who try to do as much as the stronger ones.

### II. Games.

The combination of English Games and Swedish Gymnastics makes an almost perfect training system for the young. To derive the full benefit of games, as well as gymnastics, both should be organized with great understanding and care. When children commence games they should be short in duration, the playground restricted and racket or bat made to suit the child's requirements. Short and frequent practices should be the rule, as long ones make the child stiff and tired. After all games it is essential for the players to change all underclothing and have a good rub down. Delicate children should not take part in any strenuous games.

It is on the playing-fields that children learn the value of law, this lesson is fitting them to become good citizens. Henry Newbolt's poem, "Play up! play up! and play the game!" now the school song of Eton, gives a beautiful suggestion of the far-reaching effects of our English games.

I think we should try to plan that our pupils over twelve years of age take part in organized games. Would it not be possible, in districts where several families are in the P.U.S. at any rate, to form P.U.S. games clubs for hockey, lacrosse and cricket? This would mean many joyous meetings, and in time we might be able to arrange matches with other P.U.S. teams or against some of the P.U. Schools.

Another plan would be to form or join some local club. Children who are not going to school would especially benefit by these organized games.

### III. Dancing.

This is a most exacting form of exercise; the position is one of constant balance, much memorizing is needed and steps are intricate and complicated. This taxes the nervous system, though music and rhythm for the time cover fatigue. During the critical time of growing girls, the same precautions should hold good as in gymnastics and games.

There are many arm movements and simple steps which we can teach our pupils, should we have to take dancing, all of which lead to grace and lightness of movement, and I think minuets and gavottes are amongst the most beautiful dances specially suited to small classes. All children love country dances.

### Scouting.

Scouting gives children splendid physical training, especially the scouting games in the open country. One of the great advantages of scouting is that it is possible for children of every class, and is of special benefit to the poorer children, who do not get many games.

All our pupils ought to become either Ambleside Scouts or Girl Guides. Even a single child may join either, the latter being known as "Lone Guides."

There is a question I should like to raise here. Is it still quite impossible for us to amalgamate with the Girl Guides in some way? I know we were Scouts long before Girl Guides were even thought of, and I pride myself on being one of the earliest Ambleside Scouts—yet I know that many of us have already found our pupils to be Girl Guides, or wishing to be so, and we ourselves have been asked to take a share in the work of the company.

Children realize the responsibility and honour of belonging to a recognized national organization, and many of our pupils will become officers later. Also we find children of all classes intermingle, and learn to understand one another, which is surely an important point in our present age.

It would be sad indeed to see the end of the Ambleside Scouts as such, but surely if we could do bigger work for our country by becoming Girl Guides, it would be worth considering.

In conclusion let us make up our minds that our pupils shall have the very best physical training. Let us join with them in out-door games, scouting, swimming, rowing, riding, or what you will, whenever we can.

We want as well as building up a better England, to build up a healthier England. The children of to-day will be the men and women of the future—let us see they become healthy men and women, fit for their task.

P. N. BOWSER.

### Physical Training Discussion.

*Girl Guides.*—In the discussion, the question was raised of affiliating the P.U.S. Scouts to the Girl Guides. Those who teach in families where there are both girls and boys were not in favour of the change; one reason being that the boys would be excluded and the other that a regulation uniform would be required for the girls. We understand, however, that boys can be attached to a company of Baden Powell Scouts as "Wolf-cubs" without uniform, and the girls to the Girl Guides as "Brownies."

In spite of the very strong feeling that the P.U.S. Scouts should remain as they were, the resolution was passed that the girls be affiliated to Baden Powell's Girl Guides. We were reminded also that care should be taken in gymnastic exercises not to overdo the physical education of very young children. Certain exercises (e.g. abdominal) should not be given at all to the little ones. The Board of Education Handbook of Physical Drill (1/6) was recommended as a useful guide in this respect, the tables of drill being drawn up according to the age of the pupils. House of Education students are not specialists in physical education, but our training qualifies us to meet the needs of normal children of all ages. Cases of physical defect which require special attention should be submitted to a doctor or physical specialist.

At the close of the discussion, the Present Students gave us a most delightful demonstration of the House of Education Drills, some of which were quite new to us. The dancing of the Gavotte and Stage Morris called forth loud applause, in reply to which the students very generously gave an "encore."

F. W. YOUNG.

#### *Discussion following the Lessons given by the Present Students.*

Several students laid stress on the excellent results gained in Elementary Schools in arithmetic.

Miss Pennethorne agreed that the work done was accurate and neat, but only went as far as Simple Interest, and the real reason for each process was hardly ever grasped. She felt that Arithmetic, Euclid, and Algebra should be taken together and symbols used for numbers as early as possible. Miss Wiseman dwelt on the necessity for understanding the spirit of number, and knowing something of the first early Masters. She recommended *A History of Mathematics*, by Dr. Rouse (price 12/6) and *The Story of Number* and *The Story of Algebra* (price 1/6 pre-war) in the "Story" series, also *Elementary Algebra*, by Godfrey and Siddons (price 3/6). She also said that lack of mathematical ability was often regarded as a family failing, an attitude that acted as a great stumbling-block.

Miss Rankin spoke of the difficulty of securing sufficient time for practising sums. Elementary school children do endless examples on each rule.

Miss Wix said one excellent teacher she had had always made a point of setting one example every day of each rule learnt during the previous two or three months together with the examples of the rules then being learnt.

Miss W. Kitching said inaccuracy in the teacher was a frequent hindrance to children and that she had once heard the expression "Decimal ninety-one" used over and over again in a lesson. Absolute accuracy at every point must be insisted on in mathematics.

#### DISCUSSION

37

Miss Gladding said that concrete numbers convey nothing to some children.

Miss Allen said that she found it a great help to use them in terms of cakes or apples or anything to eat.

The main issue of the discussion on Narration seemed to be that teachers should talk less during the lesson, and so leave sufficient time for narration.

Miss Allen referred to the preface in Paterson Smyth's books in which he states that narration bores the teacher, and urging self-denial in the matter.

One student asked if it were possible to make time for narration and report of the same lesson.

Miss Williams said the programmes gave directions about narration leading up to reports which in their turn lead to composition.

Miss Macfarlane mentioned a pupil who could not at first narrate the simplest thing. To cure her she read one sentence at a time and made the child repeat it and eventually she learnt to narrate quite well.

Miss Wix said she used to urge pupils to remember the first sentence of their reading as a help in starting to narrate or report, and when a dead stop occurred in the former, she thought suggestion as to the sequence of events in the reading in order to make a fresh start was quite allowable.

Miss Williams said that *mental* headings were quite permissible and to be recommended.

Miss Pennethorne, speaking on the subject of allowing sufficient time for reports, etc., said that in an un-P.N.E.U. School she knew of the children who were sacrificed for accuracy and thoroughness by being given a little work for a great deal of time, which is the bitter complaint of most P.U.S. children on going to other schools.

M. E. BRITTLEBANK (née Davis).